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WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Preparatory Committee
First session
Geneva, 9-13 September 1991
Items 5, 6 and 7 of the provisional agenda

AGENDA, RULES OF PROCEDURE, DATES, DURATION, VENUE OF AND PARTICIPATION AT THE WORLD CONFERENCE

PREPARATORY MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES AT THE INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

STUDIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE

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Need for continued promotion and protection of human rights

1. The 1968 International Conference on Human Rights at Tehran weighed up the human rights situation since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and drew up a programme which provided the basis for a number of international norms on human rights and rules on their application and verification, and promotion and verification activities such as we are familiar with today.

2. The human rights situation has without question improved in recent years, and we welcome this. The World Conference on Human Rights should, however, as it weighs up the situation, take care that general satisfaction does not eclipse the need for continued promotion and protection of human rights.

3. The era of the cold war and antagonism between opposing blocs is over, and has been followed by general political détente which favours respect for human rights. This new, general consensus must not, however, be allowed to cover up or mask human rights violations wherever in the world they occur, or give rise to purely theoretical discussion of these crucial questions which concretely affect the inhabitants of the Earth.

4. Today more than ever before, all Member States need to ratify and apply all the international instruments on human rights. Unfortunately, most of the States permanent members of the Security Council are nowhere near ratifying them, and this prompts many developing countries to claim that human rights are being used by the major Powers to destabilize the South.

Promotion and defence of social, economic and cultural rights

5. In its evaluation of activities to defend and promote human rights, the Conference will undoubtedly find that hitherto the United Nations and Member States have mainly emphasized and concentrated on the protection and promotion of civil and political rights. Given the incidence of widespread, flagrant and repeated violations of these rights, that was necessary.

6. The World Confederation of Labour wishes, however, to point out - as the Conference itself will undoubtedly do - that it is not only very important but, today, urgent to promote and defend social, economic and cultural rights, without which civil and political rights cannot be guaranteed.

7. The events taking place in most countries in Latin America and some in Asia, among others, bear witness to the threats which democracies face as a result of failure to respect and apply these rights, which were affirmed and recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the General Assembly in 1966, and its Declaration on the Right to Development (1986).

8. We consider it essential for such a conference to provide the United Nations system with the wherewithal to put these rights concretely into practice and devise monitoring machinery, while taking care that the United Nations system does not become a vehicle for policies detrimental to the respect and application of such rights.

Non-governmental organization participation

9. To ensure that the Conference represents the real situation, we would very much like those who are actively involved in the defence and promotion of human rights to be able to take part.

10. Such participation should take place not only during the Conference itself but also throughout the preparatory period, nationally and internationally. We would like to see the broadest possible participation at all stages of the preparations by non-governmental organizations including trade unions, churches, teachers' associations, etc. not forgetting women and representatives of minorities.

11. The United Nations might suggest to Member States that they include representatives of non-governmental organizations, women and spokesmen for minorities in their delegations.

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Corrigendum

The name of the organization appearing in the table of contents should read World Confederation of Labour.

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